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ON

THE MOVEMENTS AND PRESENT CONDITION

OF THE

Tenement House Population

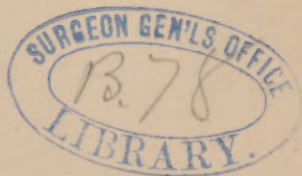
OF

NEW YORK,

WITH SUGGESTIONS OF MEASURES OF RELIEF.

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ON THE MOVEMENTS AND PRESENT CONDITION OF THE TENEMENT HOUSE POPULATION OF NEW YORK, WITH SUGGESTIONS OF MEASURES OF RELIEF.

One of the most important, if not *the* most important, sanitary questions to be determined by the authorities of large and populous towns is, "How shall the poor and dependent classes be provided with suitable dwellings?" The various and numerous sources of unhealthfulness, in every town, are of minor consequence, when compared with the gigantic evils of overcrowding in ill-constructed tenements. Health and longevity, under such circumstances, are physiological impossibilities.

Nor has this subject only a sanitary aspect. The testimony of every intelligent missionary laborer among the poor, clearly establishes the fact, that the moral and spiritual welfare of this class is intimately connected with the condition of their houses. Says Dr. Southwood Smith, England's first sanitary reformer: "A clean, fresh, and well-ordered house exercises over its inmates a moral, no less than a physical influence; and has a direct tendency to make the members of the family sober, and considerate of the feelings and happiness of each other." Mr. Rawlinson, with equal truth, remarks: "Defective house accommodations produce disease, immorality, pauperism and crime, from generation to generation, until vice has become a second nature, and morality, virtue, and honesty are to human beings so debased, mere names."

It requires but little familiarity with the tenement house classes of New York to fully appreciate these sentiments. Its tenement houses as constructed and managed, are the nurseries, not only of every form of contagious disease, and of perpetual epidemics among the poor, but of every species of vice, immorality and crime. Here human beings are herded together like brutes—men, women and children, without the slightest regard to decency. All approaches of pure and fresh air are excluded, and filth is allowed to accumulate on their persons, in their clothing and beds, and within and around their apartments, to an incredible extent.

A tenement house as defined by the laws of the State, includes

"Every house, building, or portion thereof which is rented, leased, let or hired out to be occupied, or is occupied as the house or residence of more than three families living independently of each other, and doing their cooking upon the premises, or by more than two families upon a floor, so living and cooking, but having a common right in the halls, stairways, yards, water-closets, or privies, or some of them."

This is a description of a tenement house of minimum size, and gives no adequate conception of the great mass of the tenement houses of New York.

In general they are old structures which were built for other purposes, partitioned off within so as to give each family two rooms, a living-room 10 by 12 feet, and a bed-room 6 by 4 feet; while no regard is paid to ventilation or domestic conveniences. Twenty, thirty, forty, to 150 such apartments are constructed, and into each a family of from 3 to 5 persons is crowded. Dangerous as is such overcrowding in individual houses, when exposed to the full play of the winds, the danger is increased one-hundredfold when such dwellings are as closely packed together in the blocks, as are the people in their apartments. Rear tenement houses aggravate the evil beyond measure. They are built upon the rear of the yard, close to the rear tenement of the opposite lot, leaving a small, cold and damp space between the front and rear houses, not inappropriately called "the well hole." Not only are fresh air and sunlight thus effectually excluded from the living and sleeping apartments of most of the inmates, but the buildings become cold and damp, and in time are saturated with the poisonous and filthy excreta of the inmates. While the wood and other materials of such structures, undergo the process of dry rot, the wretched tenants waste and die from a disease expressively termed "tenement-house rot."

The debasing effects of such houses has never been overdrawn. Perhaps the most vivid picture of the moral and physical degradation of this class of people was sketched by N. P. Willis, immediately after the riots of 1863, who was an eye witness to what he so truthfully describes. He says:

"The high, brick blocks and closely packed houses in this neighborhood, seemed to be literally hives of sickness and vice. Curiosity to look on at the fire raging so near them, brought every inhabitant to the porch or window, or assembled them in ragged and dirty groups on the sidewalks in front. Probably not a creature who could move, was left in-doors at that hour. And it is wonderful to see and difficult to believe, that so much misery, and disease, and wretchedness, can be huddled together, and hidden by high walls, unvisited and unthought of, so near our own abodes. The lewd, but pale and sickly young women, scarce decent in their ragged attire, were impudent, and scattered everywhere in the crowd. But what numbers of these poorer classes are deformed, what numbers are made hideous by self-neglect and infirmity, and what numbers are paralytics, drunkards, imbecile or idiotic, forlorn in their poverty-stricken abandonment for this world! Alas! human faces look so hideous with hope and vanity all gone! And female form and features are made so frightful by sin, squalor, and debasement. To walk the streets as we walked them, for those hours of conflagration and riot, was like a fearful witnessing of the day of judgment, with every wicked thing revealed, every hidden horror and abomination laid bare before hell's expectant fire."

While the necessity of improving the house accommodations of the poor is as great, and perhaps greater in New York than in any other city, the problem is far more difficult of solution. Its insular position gives to it no suburbs, and hence no cheap lands on which the poor can build their own houses, nor where capitalists can build for them at remunerative prices. The pressure of commerce for surface area must grow more and more irresistible every year. The natural result of this conversion of older sections of the city to commercial purposes has been to raise the prices of land unoccupied to such an extent as to render it inaccessible except to the wealthy. In the discussion of the

great sanitary question, "How shall the poor of New York be supplied with suitable homes?" it is important to study the past movements of the tenement house population and of commerce with a view to determine their future relations upon this island.

A quarter of a century ago, the tenement house population lived below Canal Street. At that time commerce, and business of various kinds, began to encroach upon their dwellings, and they sought homes on the comparatively cheap lands below Fourteenth Street and east of Broadway. Gradually the First, Second, and Third Wards became depopulated; and in place of the small and inconvenient tenements of the poor, appeared the enormous warehouses, stores, and manufactories which now cover this area. In the years 1855-60, the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Wards began very sensibly to feel the pressure of commerce, and another emigration of the poor took place to the eastern wards, viz.: Seventh, Tenth, Thirteenth, Eleventh, Fourteenth, and Seventeenth. Between the years 1860-65, this process of forcing the poor out of the lower wards mentioned continued, and we find that in the latter year the lower wards were reduced to a mere fraction of their former population, while the pressure upon the eastern wards had become fearfully great. Other adjacent wards, especially the portions bordering on the rivers, also felt the pressure, viz: the Eighth, Twentieth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-first. The great tenement house districts of this city to-day comprise the Fourth, Sixth, Seventh, Tenth, Thirteenth, Eleventh, Fourteenth, and Seventeenth Wards, and portions of the Eighth, Twentieth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-first Wards. In this comparatively limited district, and in tenement houses of the most faulty description, half the population of New York now find homes.

These movements of the tenement house class during the past twenty years are strikingly exhibited in the following table, which shows that this population was in large part removed from the First, Second, and Third Wards during that period. The largest reduction in population occurred in the Second Ward, amounting to upwards of 80 per cent. During the last ten years the same process of emigration and from the same cause is noticeable in the Fifth and Sixth Wards.

On the other hand, the increase of population of the other wards occupied by tenement houses is correspondingly great, showing that the emigrants from the lower wards find their homes in the tenement houses of the upper wards. Thus the increase in the Seventh, Tenth, Eleventh, and Seventeenth Wards in twenty years, has, on the average, been 100 per cent.

CHANGE OF POPULATION DURING THE TWENTY YEARS 1850-70.

Wards.	1850.	1860.	1870.
First.....	19,754	18,120	14,463
Second.....	6,665	2,507	1,312
Third.....	10,355	3,757	3,715
Fourth.....	23,250	21,994	23,787
Fifth.....	22,686	22,341	17,152
Sixth.....	24,698	26,698	21,153
	107,408	95,417	81,582

Seventh.....	82,690	40,006	44,879
Tenth.....	28,816	29,051	41,411
Eleventh.....	48,758	59,963	64,230
Thirteenth.....	28,246	32,917	33,365
Seventeenth.....	48,766	72,775	95,411
Eighteenth.....	31,546	57,464	59,598

The diminution in the number of dwelling houses in the lower wards during the fifteen years 1855-70 shows clearly the nature of the changes at work. The number in the different periods was as follows:

Wards.	1855.	1865.	1870.
First	660	511	415
Second	256	81	41
Third	419	185	142
Fourth	1,162	995	987
Fifth	1,620	1,251	
Sixth	11,33	938	

But while the dwelling houses diminished, the stores or business houses increased; and in 1870 the following was the number of stores, warehouses, and business houses in the several lower wards, viz.:

First Ward.....	2,603
Second Ward.....	1,327
Third Ward.....	1,297
Fourth Ward.....	
Fifth Ward	1,173

These business houses average five stories in height, and are for the most part 25x100 feet.

The degree of overcrowding in our present tenement house districts, exceeds that of any of the large cities of the civilized world. The following comparative table exhibits the population to the square acre of the tenement house classes, or the poor of New York and London, according to the census of 1870:

NEW YORK.		LONDON.	
Ward 11th.....	328.	Strand.....	307
" 13th.....	311.	St. Luke's.....	259
" 14th.....	275.	East London.....	266
" 17th.....	289.	Holborn.....	229

The effect of this excessive crowding in badly constructed dwellings upon the death rate is exhibited in the fact that this half of the population of New York yields 75 per cent. of the total annual sickness and mortality. Sickness and death are, however, but a fraction of the sum total of damage which overcrowding and defective house accommodations do to the poor. They are compelled to live in such familiar contact, such daily and nightly exposure of sexes, almost bestial, and such utter disregard of the common decencies of rational beings, that vice and the grossest immorality pervade the very atmosphere of their homes.

The excess of this overcrowding will appear when we state that the ablest English sanitarians, (*Health and Sickness of Towns' Populations*), fix the maximum density for health at 80 persons to the acre; whilst the highest French authority, (LEVY, *Hygiene Publique*), allows 100 persons to the acre.

But while commerce has been driving the poor from the lower wards of the city, a new feature has been added to the problem of providing suitable homes for the poor in the enormous rise in the valuation of lands over the entire Island. This must result in preventing the extension of the area of tenement houses in the upper parts of the Island, and consequently will be followed by still greater crowding and concentration in the present tenement house districts. The truth is, that between the high priced and hence unavailable lands in the upper portions of the city, and the encroachments of commerce in the lower districts, the tenement house population is being yearly crowded into narrower quarters, though that population is itself steadily on the increase. The degree of pressure of this class upon surface area in the 17th, 11th, and other wards, already frightful, must eventually, if no adequate remedy is provided, result in a death rate of enormous proportions. It is a fixed and unchangeable law, that when the number of persons on a given area, living on the surface or in low buildings, exceeds a certain limit, the annual mortality will remove the surplus. To prevent such consequences, either the population to surface area must be diminished, or a larger cubical area must be obtained by elevation with increased or adequate supply of pure air.

This law is abundantly illustrated in New York. In the old tenement house with low ceilings, three or four stories give but little elevation, and the mortality is greater in the same proportion than in the adjoining new tenement house with high ceilings, and hence elevated stories. But even when due allowance is made for improved ventilation within given limits, increased cubical area is not the equivalent of increased surface area in the effects upon the health of the people. It is evident to every one who studies this subject attentively, that the growing and already gigantic evils of our imperfect homes for the poor and dependent classes, must soon have an adequate remedy applied, or the death rate of New York in spite of every other form of sanitary improvement, must exceed that of any other city in the world. No more imperative duty devolves upon our City Government than that of devising and applying such remedy and with as much dispatch as possible.

The methods of relief which suggest themselves are as follows, viz.:

- I.—THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING TENEMENT HOUSES.
- II.—RECONSTRUCTION OF TENEMENT HOUSES ON THE MOST APPROVED SANITARY PRINCIPLES.
- III.—ERECTION OF MODEL BUILDINGS.
- IV.—THE DISPERSION OF THIS POPULATION, OR ITS DIFFUSION OVER A LARGER AREA.

I. *Improvement of Existing Tenement Houses.*—The first method of relief, or that of improving the sanitary condition of existing tenement houses, has

occupied the attention of the Board of Health during the past six years. These improvements were made in accordance with the provisions of the law for the regulation of tenement and lodging houses. They relate principally to ventilation, defective drains, water-closets, cleanliness, &c. The aggregate amount of work done in effecting these improvements is incredible; in one year upwards of 49,000 ventilating windows were opened in those dwellings; while every spring and autumn a thorough inspection is made with a view to secure a semi-annual cleaning and necessary repairs. The result of these improvements is most gratifying. When the work began, the mortality in the tenement houses was about 75 per cent. of the total mortality of the city. It has steadily fallen, year by year, from 75 to 68, and from the latter figures to 66 per cent. and is still falling, showing during the last year an actual saving of 2,600 lives. And what is most important, the greatest reduction is in the tenement houses which were formerly in the worst condition and where the improvements have been the most thorough.

The result of this work appears in the following comparative statement of the mortality in tenement houses, public institutions and private dwellings during the past four years :

	First Dist.	Sec'd Dist.	Third Dist.	Total.
1868..Tenement Houses.....	3,645	5,823	5,082	14,550
Private Dwellings.....	1,778	986	3,261	6,025
Public Institutions.....	338	91	3,885	4,314
Total.....				24,889
1869..Tenement Houses.....	3,359	5,192	4,734	13,285
Private Dwellings.....	2,370	1,499	3,948	7,817
Public Institutions.....	311	90	3,664	4,065
Total.....				25,167
1870..Tenement Houses.....	3,017	5,500	4,535	13,052
Private Dwellings.....	2,426	1,632	5,120	9,178
Public Institutions.....	753	111	4,081	4,945
Total.....				27,175
1871..Tenement Houses.....	3,020	4,832	4,892	12,744
Private Dwellings.....	2,327	1,889	4,827	9,043
Public Institutions.....	1,041	152	3,996	5,189
Total.....				26,976

But the improvements which the Board has effected in the ventilation, cleanliness, &c., of these buildings, but mitigates the evil; it does not strike at the root, and effectually eradicate it.

II.—*Reconstruction of Existing Tenement Houses.*—A far more important remedy is that of reconstructing the old and imperfect tenement houses. The improvements contemplated by this work are radical changes in the interior arrangements of the buildings by which proper sanitary conditions are permanently secured. The rooms are rearranged for the convenience of families;

thorough ventilation of every room and of all parts of the building is effected; new stories or extensions if necessary are added; water-closets and drains are properly located and made substantial; dilapidated walls, wood-work, stairs, &c., are renewed; in a word, the interior of the building is entirely remodeled and reconstructed, and the whole is placed in the most approved sanitary condition. The effect of this change in a tenement house upon the health, happiness, and morals of the tenants is marvelous. They cheerfully pay the increased rents; they now cultivate habits of cleanliness; family privacy and isolation being better secured, morals are improved; while cases of sickness become infrequent, and deaths almost unknown.

Examples illustrating the importance of reconstructing tenement houses are numerous. A house in East 17th street having a capacity for ten families, had fallen into a condition of extreme dilapidation and filth. It was long occupied by the poorest and most depraved classes, when in addition to other diseases, typhus fever began to prevail among the inmates, and in the course of six months 20 persons had this disease. It was then vacated and thoroughly repaired; the privies and drains were placed in good order; the walls were scraped and replastered; the wood-work was renewed; through and through ventilation in every room was secured; and the whole was neatly painted. During the five succeeding years scarcely a case of sickness occurred in that house.

The Old Brewery was formerly occupied by the lowest class of people living about the Five Points. It was in an extreme degree of dilapidation, and saturated with filth of every description. Every form of contagious disease here found a natural home, and diseases directly traceable to local causes prevailed throughout the year. The death rate of this community was about 55 per thousand, and the sickness rate was nearly equal to the total population. This building was taken possession of by the Methodist Society, and converted into a mission-house. The interior was entirely remodeled, additions were made, and two stories of the old building were converted into living-rooms for families, each family having one living-room and one or two bed-rooms according to their necessities, with adequate ventilation. The capacity of these two stories was for 20 families. The families which occupy this portion of the reconstructed Old Brewery are of the same grade as those which formerly occupied this building. They are the most destitute and abandoned class of that district. The Mission gives them apartments free of rent, provided they conform strictly to the rules of the institution, and support themselves. These rules require that no liquors shall be drank by the inmates, nor brought into the house; perfect cleanliness of their persons, apartments, and halls shall be preserved; they shall retire and rise at a given hour, &c., &c. The results are surprising. There is not more than one death annually among these 20 families, and that from chronic diseases not traceable to the house, and but rarely is there a case of sickness.

Here we have an example of a small community of about 100 persons with a death rate sufficient to entirely destroy it twice in a little over one generation, and a sickness rate, that on an average kept 3 persons constantly con-

fined to bed, by the thorough reconstruction of their dwellings, and the strict observance of the simplest rules of hygiene transformed into a community where the sickness rate is reduced to that of the healthiest country residents, and the length of life increased more than twofold. The improvement of morals and social habits as cleanliness, good order, sobriety, &c., is most marked.

The tenement house, 33 Cherry street, was vacated by the Board of Health last fall on account of its extreme dilapidation. A more unsightly building externally and internally could scarcely be conceived when the wretched tenants finally left it. The landlord endeavored to lease it but could not, and was finally compelled to reconstruct its interior. It is now one of the most comfortable, convenient, and best appointed tenement houses, in that ward. The cost of reconstruction was about \$5,000, and the increase in the rents which the improvements command will pay 10 to 15 per cent. on the expense. No sickness has occurred in this house since its reoccupation. The old building known as "Gotham Court" occupied frequently by 150 families, which had long been the nursery of every form of crime and contagious disease, has recently been thoroughly reconstructed by order of the Board of Health, at an expense of upwards of \$20,000. This building has just been reoccupied, and we do not hesitate to predict that the sickness rate will be 75 per cent. less than formerly. Examples like the foregoing might be multiplied by thousands. They prove beyond all question that the reconstruction of tenement houses is a sanitary work of the first importance, and will tend powerfully to diminish the otherwise inevitable sickness and death rates of New York.

A question arises in this connection of much practical interest, viz.: will the expenses of such reconstruction pay the landlords such percentages by increased rents and larger accommodations as to obviate their objections to these improvements? in all the instances examined, this question was answered in the affirmative. A better class of tenants immediately seek admission to these improved tenements, and pay without hesitation the increased rents; even the old tenants frequently prefer to pay the higher rent, for the sake of the improvements and increased comforts. The actual moneyed valuation of these improvements varies from 10 to 20 per cent. on the outlay. It is idle to allege that the poor cannot pay higher rents, even if thereby they secure exemption from sickness. Sickness and debility, are far more expensive to the poor than the most exorbitant rents. This subject has recently been fully studied and illustrated by Mr. Fletcher, an architect of London, in a small volume on *Model Houses for the Industrial Classes*. In this work Mr. Fletcher gives the results of his examination of a great variety of old tenement houses, with plans for their reconstruction. He shows, conclusively, that every variety of house, from an ordinary old-fashioned dwelling, for one family, to the most irregular store or warehouse, may be converted into a model tenement house, containing every convenience and comfort; and adapted, in every respect, to secure the health of its inhabitants. He also gives, in every instance, the cost of such improvements, and shows not only that these improvements will richly repay the landlord, but that it is far cheaper to convert old buildings into

model tenement houses, than to build such houses from the foundation. In every aspect of the subject, therefore, the reconstruction of old houses, and their conversion into model tenements, is a great sanitary and economical measure. The tenement house law, however, does not give the Board of Health sufficient power over ill-constructed tenement houses. It can order their vacation only when they are so infected with disease, or out of repair, as to be dangerous to life. It should have power, not only to compel the thorough reconstruction of all improperly arranged tenement houses, but no tenement house should be erected the entire plans of which have not been approved by the Board of Health.

III.—*Erection of Model Buildings.*—The third method of relief is in the construction of *Model Tenement Houses*. The sanitary value of model tenement houses cannot be overestimated. Wherever they are found, the effect upon the tenants is most salutary, both as regards their health and their morals. Certain forms of disease, so prostrating and so fatal, disappear; contagious diseases are rarely met with; pale and sickly children become ruddy; cleanliness and order pervade each household; good manners and reserve succeed to rudeness; and personal respectability becomes the ruling motive. The experiments instituted by Mr. Peabody and Miss Burdett Coutts, prove that houses may be so constructed as to give to the poorest class of tenants, homes which secure to them, at moderate rents, every needed domestic convenience, and all the conditions of health. The effect of a residence in these dwellings upon the tenants, is thus summed up by Dr. Bowditch, of Boston, who lately visited the Peabody buildings:—"Sickness is very rare; epidemics have not raged inside, though, at times, prevalent immediately outside of the buildings, the general care of personal appearance of each tenant improves. This is remarkable chiefly in the women and children. In some instances, the change in men is wonderful, miraculous; a drunkard, slovenly and dirty; a husband neglectful of wife and home, under the influence of the silent example of his neighbors in these buildings, and from his own growing self-respect, became careful of his person, and his evil habits of drunkenness left him. He was literally a man renewed. The influence on children is almost constant. They may enter the buildings uncleanly, and with torn garments, but they rarely remain so long. Maternal pride and the stimulus applied to it, by the desire of the child to appear as well and as neat as its playmates, work wonderful cures."

While the value of such model houses for the laboring classes, is undoubted, a practical question arises which must be settled, viz.: Will the outlay on the part of the owner, pay a suitable income? It is not probable that the same kind of effort, where mere philanthropy is to be the main-spring of action, will soon be made in New York. The slight attempts, in former years, to erect model houses in this city proved very discouraging and will not soon be repeated. We must look to the present landlords of tenement house property for whatever improvements are to be made, and the Board of Health should have the supervision of the sanitary arrangement of the plans.

So far as the experiments of Mr. Peabody and Miss Coutts answer the question, the reply is in the negative. The returns upon the capital invested

are so small as to be entirely unremunerative. But it was not the aim of these philanthropists to construct tenements for the purpose of testing this question, but rather to prove that the poor, living in suitable homes, would be frugal, thrifty and healthy; and they have abundantly established that fact. The question of building such model houses for the poor as would be remunerative has been settled by another enterprise which combined philanthropy with the remunerative investment of capital, known as the "Improved Industrial Dwelling Company." This company was organized in 1863, through the exertions of Sir Sydney Waterlow, a wealthy and public spirited gentleman now Lord Mayor of London. This company so adapted their buildings to the necessities of their tenants, and so economized their outlay, as to render their buildings remunerative. It has already constructed upwards of 430 tenements.

IV.—*Dispersion of the Tenement House Population.*—While it is evident that the improvement and reconstruction of the dwellings of the industrial classes will greatly add to the health, morals, and comforts of those occupying them, it is nevertheless true that these measures are not alone sufficient to remedy the growing evils of the tenement house system of New York. As already stated, the increase of the population to a given area may reach such a point that, whatever may be the condition of dwellings, the mortality will gradually rise, and its ratio will be directly according to this increase. We have already shown that the tenement house districts of this city seem not only to have reached their utmost expansion, but in fact are undergoing contraction while the population, aside from its natural growth, is annually receiving large accessions by immigration.

The methods of relief by dispersion are of two kinds :

(a) *Dispersion into the surrounding country.*—This has long been a favorite scheme with those who have endeavored to solve the problem of procuring better homes for the poor, but as yet it has yielded no adequate results. There are at least two obstacles to this plan. The first is the difficulty of supplying suitable means of conveyance for this class of people. They desire cheap and rapid transit. Cheap transit for laboring men who live in tenement houses must be cheap indeed to attract them from the city. The income of the greater number is of the most uncertain character, while the daily outlay for travel is a constant quantity. A distinguished philanthropist has stated that the fares of railroads must be reduced to twenty-five cents per week to bring them within the incomes of the poor in cities. As yet there is no evidence that any railroad leading from New York would place their fares at such rates as to afford cheap travel, or, in other words, to accommodate poor laborers. It is only on the waters that cheap travel can be expected, and even our present steamboat lines do not, and probably will not, reduce their rates of fare as low as this class require to make the inducement sufficiently strong to tempt them to seek homes in the country. But steamboat traveling is not rapid, and does not secure to the laborer that quick transfer from his home to

the place of work—provided he lives at a distance from the city—that he desires. He must depend upon the railroad, which, as we have stated, does not, and probably will not, give him cheap fares without compulsory legislation, and such legislation, we believe, should be at once obtained. As a slight return for the privileges which railroad corporations enjoy within this city, especially in the monopoly of large areas of valuable land, they should be compelled to provide cheap transit for the poor and laboring classes. Such legislation in England long since compelled all new railroads entering London to provide penny trains at suitable hours.—(*Jour. Social Science*, 1866. These cheap trains proved a marked success. The Legislature of Massachusetts recently passed a law compelling the railroads entering Boston to provide cheap trains morning and evening.* The same kind of legislation should be obtained in this State, in regard to all railroads entering New York.

The second obstacle to the dispersion of this class in the surrounding country is the indisposition of large numbers to leave the city. Born and bred in these tenement-house communities, where every vulgar passion is constantly excited and readily gratified, with the moral sense obliterated and habits of decency unknown, where domestic isolation is impossible if desired, they not only have no taste for the quietude of the country, but resist with desperation every effort to induce them to leave their present homes. Those familiar with the habits, desires, and prejudices of the poor of the city, know full well that whatever facilities are provided for their residence in the country, nothing short of compulsion will remove any considerable number of them from the city. We are brought, therefore, again face to face with the original problem of providing suitable homes for those who for any reason will not improve facilities for living out of the city.

(b) *Dispersion within the City.*—The question which we now have to consider is:—If we cannot disperse this class in the country, can it be dispersed within the city, and thus prevent that overcrowding which, with the best devised dwellings, will not save us from an enormous mortality?

We have already seen that the rise of land in the upper part of the Island, effectually prevents the erection of tenement houses, on unoccupied grounds in this region, at least to an extent, to meet the increasing wants of the poor. Nor is it desirable that these uptown districts should be thus occupied, except along the river fronts; or, in the vicinity of manufacturing establishments. It would add much to the future salubrity, and beauty, of these districts, if the larger portion were reserved for the spacious buildings and thorough improvements which the wealthier classes would necessarily require and secure.

* AN ACT IN RELATION TO CHEAP MORNING AND EVENING RAILROAD TRAINS TO AND FROM BOSTON. Approved May 6th, 1862.

Every Railroad Corporation, or party owning or controlling a railroad running out from Boston, shall furnish each day a morning train IN, and an evening train OUT, or suitable cars attached to other trains, and reaching and leaving Boston about six o'clock in the forenoon and afternoon, or at such hours as may be fixed by the Railroad Commissioners, for distances not exceeding fifteen miles, and for such trains they shall furnish yearly season tickets at a rate not exceeding three dollars per mile per year, good once a day each way for six days in a week, and quarterly tickets not exceeding one dollar per quarter per mile: *provided*, that the number of persons making application therefor shall not be less than two hundred.

There is but one other method of solving this question, and fortunately, that method is daily becoming more and more practicable. The commerce, which, during the last 25 years, has gradually driven these people from the first, second and third wards, and is now pressing upon them in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth wards, is voluntarily deserting the lower wards, and leaving them not only without business, but also without tenants. Meantime it has covered these wards with immense storehouses, many of which have been built in the most approved manner. They are, in general, twenty feet front by eighty, ninety or one hundred feet in depth, and five or six stories in height. These stories are large and spacious, and admit of the most perfect ventilation. They admit also of being divided and sub-divided, until each can be made a flat for the residence of families, each suite of apartments having the most perfect arrangements as regards sanitary completeness.

The great problem of providing better house accommodation for the poor, and of relieving the terrible crowding in the present tenement house districts, could be solved, if the unused warehouses of the first, second, third and fifth wards were converted into model tenement houses, and an emigration of the laboring classes should take place from the upper to the lower wards. The second ward, at present, offers the greatest inducements for such a change. It has now a population of but 1,312, being but one person to 298 square yards, and contains no less than 1,327 immense warehouses and stores, or a store to each inhabitant. Statistics of commercial transactions show also that business has for the last few years, and notably within the last three years, gradually declined in the second ward, while it has correspondingly increased in the fifth, eighth and other wards. The question has indeed, been anxiously discussed of late by the owners of real estate and of the stores in the second ward, "How can these vacant buildings be again made to pay remunerative rents?" A definite answer may now be given, viz.: "CONVERT THEM INTO MODEL TENEMENTS FOR THE LABORING CLASSES." They may thus be made to pay from 10 to 15 and even 20 per cent. upon the cost of the original purchase, and of the necessary reconstruction expenses.

That these large buildings can be converted into convenient, comfortable, and healthful domicils for the poor, at an expense which future rents will quickly reimburse, and afterwards provide a permanent percentage largely remunerative, we are not left to conjecture. Instances have already been given demonstrating the fact that, in this city, old dwellings may be reconstructed, which will then yield a revenue from rents of from 10 to 25 per cent. upon the expenses incurred. The same is true of warehouses, stores, &c. These buildings, as found in the second ward, are peculiarly adapted to such improvements; they have large spacious stories, susceptible of any amount and kind of subdivision; the drainage is already good, and the ventilation may be easily arranged so as to adapt most perfect methods to each room.

It may be estimated that if the stores of the second ward were converted into tenement houses, they would each accommodate, on an average, 20 fam-

ilies, or 100 persons, giving a total additional population of 13,120, which, added to the existing population, makes a grand total of 14,432. The surface area to each person would then be 27 square yards, instead of 298 as now; but it would be nearly twice as great as it is in the eleventh ward (1 person to about 14 square yards). If these 13,120 persons should emigrate from one of the several upper wards, which are now excessively crowded, to the second ward, the result would be that the population of the up-town ward would be reduced to the census of ten to twenty years ago. For example, if these 13,120 were withdrawn from the seventh ward, the population would be about as in 1850; from the tenth ward, 1840; from the eleventh ward, 1855; from the thirteenth ward, 1842; from the fourteenth ward, 1830; from the seventeenth ward, 1867.

The effect of this change of population upon the public health of the ward or wards relieved would be most salutary. Nor would the change be less beneficial to those who entered the new and improved tenements in the lower wards. They would have admirable homes with much greater exposure to prevailing winds. The economical aspects of the question are also important. The laboring man would now be brought into immediate contact with his work. He could live with a minimum expense, and could give the maximum of labor.

It would seem, therefore, from this review of the movements of the dependent population during the past quarter of a century, that while commerce has driven them from the lower wards, and is now severely and fatally pressing upon them in the present limited tenement house districts, it is itself preparing a method of relief. The very buildings with which it covers the territory taken from the poor may be destined to become the future model tenement houses of New York.

We are not left to conjecture as to the importance of such a change. In Edinburgh the old buildings of a deserted quarter of the town were taken possession of, and converted into model dwellings for the poor. The result was most gratifying; the death rate of that part of the population fell notably; the morals improved; and this once abandoned district became one of the pleasantest suburbs of the city. Many other similar examples might be given, illustrating the importance of converting unused buildings in commercial quarters into residences for the poor. In New York such a change is to become an absolute necessity.

Conclusions.—The following general conclusions may be stated as the result of this examination of the movements of the tenement house population, and of their present and prospective requirements:

1.—Overcrowding of the poor of New York results from the extension of the surface area required by commerce on the south, and of the high price of lands on the north.

2.—This overcrowding now exceeds that of the most densely populated cities of the civilized world, and will steadily increase, unless adequate relief is afforded, until the mortality removes the surplus population.

3.—The most immediately practicable measures of relief to overcrowding and its evils are of four kinds, viz.: 1st. Improvement and reconstruction of existing tenement houses. 2d. The building of model tenement houses. 3d. Providing cheap railroad transit. 4th. The conversion of warehouses and other unused buildings into tenement houses.

In the execution of these measures the action of the Board of Health is limited by law to the first, viz.: the improvement and reconstruction of existing tenement houses. It cannot build model tenement houses, nor can it compel railroad corporations to provide cheap transit, nor seize unoccupied buildings and convert them into dwellings for the poor. These important reforms must be effected, if at all, through proper legislation. In its own sphere of duty, the Board of Health has carried forward the work of improvement and reconstruction with commendable energy within the limits allowed by law. But these limits are far too restricted, and the work allowed under the tenement house law can never accomplish the results, which the condition of the vast and even increasing tenement house population of this city demands.

To overcome the evils of overcrowding in New-York, enlightened authority, with competent jurisdiction, must grapple with questions of far greater magnitude than those which at present concern municipal administration. The rights of property must be subordinated to the public welfare in a larger and more intelligent spirit than heretofore. Local or general governments must regulate property so that all the dependent classes shall have provided them houses which secure health, morality, and virtue. In the following opinion of an able sanitary writer and profound student, (ANGUS SMITH,* *Air and Rain*, London, 1872), we have a foreshadowing of that period when sanitary science and enlightened philanthropy will be the handmaids of the State.

* "Let those courts, alleys, and streets which show the greatest mortality and the worst air be destroyed or improved without foolish mercy. There is a want of willingness to pull down dangerous property, but a readiness to rush forward to save the life of the greatest criminals. Reason is out of the question in the matter; we are misled by an uneducated feeling. We like to save property, forgetting that deadly weapons and poisons are subject to peculiar laws, and their indiscriminate use is forbidden to the nation. Houses that produce death are not property; as well might a man claim his debts as such. If a man sells unwholesome meat, the law interferes; if he sells the use of a room with fever in it, the nation seems not to complain. Officers of health point out such places, but the public still refuse to destroy them, and great numbers are slain annually by legal methods, whilst strict measures are taken to prevent a few annually being killed by arsenic—a death more agreeable than the lingering misery in the lower parts of our crowded towns. The time must come—and the sooner the better—when it shall be enacted that no land shall contain more people per acre than we know, by experience in several places, can live healthily thereon. The same thing must be said regarding houses, although these are more difficult for Government to deal with, because of the degradation of some of the population. Still the limitation must be attained, and for that we must strive."